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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBURGEOIS, DBENZE AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Palestinian Territories, Iraq,
Lebanon (7/7-9)

11. Summary: Syrian papers reported that Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Miqdad conferred with the Advisor to the Norwegian Foreign Minister for Middle East Affairs, during which Miqdad held Israel responsible for the exacerbated situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Norwegian Advisor totally rejected Israeli practices against Palestinians and underlined "Israel's responsibility for exacerbating the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories by daily killings of sons of the Palestinian people, resulting in the Gaza invasion and increased tension in the region." He emphasized his country's "total rejection of the Israeli arrest of Palestinian officials, imprisonment of Palestinian women and children, and targeting of Palestinian citizens." The two sides agreed to carry on their contacts to achieve stability in the Palestinian territories and the region and to end the Palestinian people's ordeal.

Papers also reported that the Ninth Conference of Iraq Neighbors Plus Egypt and Bahrain was inaugurated in Tehran on Saturday. The Foreign Ministers who participated in the conference condemned the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and called on the UN Security Council to shoulder responsibility for this dangerous violation of international law and human rights agreements. A statement issued by the Arab League Secretary General Amer Mousa said that the Foreign Ministers strongly condemned the continuing Israeli aggression. The statement added that the Arab Foreign Ministers attending the conference denounced international silence over the Israeli aggression.

Papers also reported that Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, met on Saturday with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Mouallem, who is in Tehran to attend the Ninth Conference of Foreign Ministers of Iraq Neighbors Plus Egypt and Bahrain. Talks between the two dealt with topics on the agenda of the conference, as well as the latest developments in the region, including the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Iranian President inaugurated the conference with a speech calling for efforts to solve the problems of the Iraqi people and support its elected government. On the sidelines of the Conference, Mr. Mouallem and Amer Moussa, SecGen of the Arab League, discussed topics on the conference agenda and the latest

Palestinian developments.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"Syria's representative to the UN addresses the UNSC for human rights: Israel's policy on collective punishment represents state terrorism" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/7)

"Deputy Foreign Minister Miqdad reviews Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people with Norwegian Foreign Minister's Advisor for Middle East Affairs" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/8)

"Foreign Minister al-Mouallem participates in the Conference of Iraq's Neighboring states in Tehran. Syria is ready to establish relations with Iraq in various spheres in a way to ensure security and stability in Iraq and the withdrawal of foreign troops from it" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/8)

"Iranian President Ahmadinejad receives Foreign Minister al-Mouallem and inaugurates the Conference of Foreign Ministers of Iraq Neighboring States" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/9)

"Israel rejects Palestinian Prime Minister Haniyya's initiative for cool-down and negotiations. Eight Palestinians martyrs and scores of injuries resulted from open Israeli aggression in Gaza" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/9)

"Israel's agreement to swap Gilad Shalit for Palestinian prisoners does not make it stop its incursions. Eight Palestinians martyred, 22 wounded in Gaza. Israel is assured of a US Veto to abort Qatar's endeavor to condemn Israeli aggression against Palestinians" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/8)

"17 Palestinians martyred, 60 wounded in a new massacre in Gaza. A draft Arab resolution at the UNSC calling on Israel to halt its aggression against Palestinians. Israel reoccupies former settlements in the strip" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/7)

"Warnings of a human catastrophe in Miqdadiyya. Three American soldiers killed in attacks in al-Anbar" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/9)

"Lebanese MP Zeiter unveils continuing foreign intervention in the Israeli espionage network. Ambassadors of Washington and Paris asked two Lebanese Ministers to stop investigations" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/9)

"Scores of Iraqis killed and injured in a terrorist explosion at Koufa in Iraq. Al-Maliki admits violations by foreign troops and demands reviewing their immunity" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 7/7)

"Lebanese President Lahoud reveals that he has been exposed to threats because of his commitment to the right of return of Palestinian refugees. Controversial issues increase and threaten national dialogue. Warnings against dangers of strained political sentiment on security and stability in Lebanon" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/8)

"The US again rejects opening an international investigation into conditions of detainees in its prisons" (Government-owned Tishreen, 7/8)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Who Practices Blackmail?"

Ahmad Hamadah, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (7/7): "There is a twisted logic in the Western position toward the Palestinian-Israeli developments.... The capture of an Israeli soldier by Palestinian resistance factions is seen as a terrorist operation while the demand by these factions for the release of hundreds of women and children from Israeli prisons in return for the soldier's release is seen as extortion....

"If this demand is extortion, how do these [Westerners] describe the blackmail policies that Israel daily pursues against the Palestinians and their government? What do the supporters of

Israel call the destruction of the Palestinian infrastructure and how do they describe the destruction of cities and villages and the demolition of houses over the heads of their occupants? Isn't this properly characterized as terrorism and a flagrant violation of all international laws and norms and the Geneva Convention on territories under occupation?

"The West, especially the United States, practices deception and twists facts to justify Israel's crimes to the world public...."

"Self Restraint"

Isam Dari, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (7/8): "When more than 20 people are martyred in one day in a barbaric Israeli aggression in which the most advanced Israeli and American assault weapons are used, the civilized world does not bother to send a timid cable of condolences to the Palestinian people, who are slaughtered only because they are Palestinians. But when an Israeli soldier is captured in a purely military operation, the US Administration and its allies go mad, and political and diplomatic efforts, accompanied by threats and accusations, are immediately unleashed to secure the release of the captive."

"When Israel goes too far in its aggression and terrorism and crosses all red lines and taboos, we might hear some statements calling for 'self restraint' and avoidance of 'excessive force', which means that force can be used but not to excess."

"These expressions are the worst type of evasiveness.... Their use means that the superpowers, which claim to be defending

human rights, are encouraging Israel to continue its aggression and terrorism against a peaceful people. This encouragement amounts to full partnership in the aggression, especially since these superpowers have imposed an unjust siege on the Palestinian people to punish them for their democratic choice...."

"Instead of calling on Israel to demonstrate self-restraint and reduce the use of excessive force, the current situation requires clear condemnation and speedy action to stop the aggression. Any country not working in this direction is an enemy of the Palestinians and the Arabs, on equal footing with Israel itself...."

"Acknowledgment of Truth Comes First"

Hamid Huran, a commentator in government-owned Al-Ba'th, said (7/7): "Despite all Israeli attacks, assassinations, and threats, the resistance continues to stand fast and to stick to its right to respond to the aggression as strongly as its small resources allow...."

"The shelling of some Israeli settlements with homemade rockets is a message to the leaders of the occupation and the superpowers supporting them.... These superpowers have been calling for calm and self-restraint as if this were a passing issue, not an issue of occupation, siege, and starvation of an entire people...."

"The situation might escalate and affect the whole region if the occupation does not give in to a prisoner swap.... It is imperative to support the resistance through consolidation of domestic Palestinian unity and the launch of an extensive Arab diplomatic campaign, not to end the current crisis but to force the occupation leaders to abide by the international resolutions that guarantee the Palestinian people's right to their land, the creation of their state, and an end to the aggression and state terrorism to which they are subjected."

